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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

## **MEMORANDUM**

The Situation in Vietnam

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**Top Secret** 

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31 January 1967

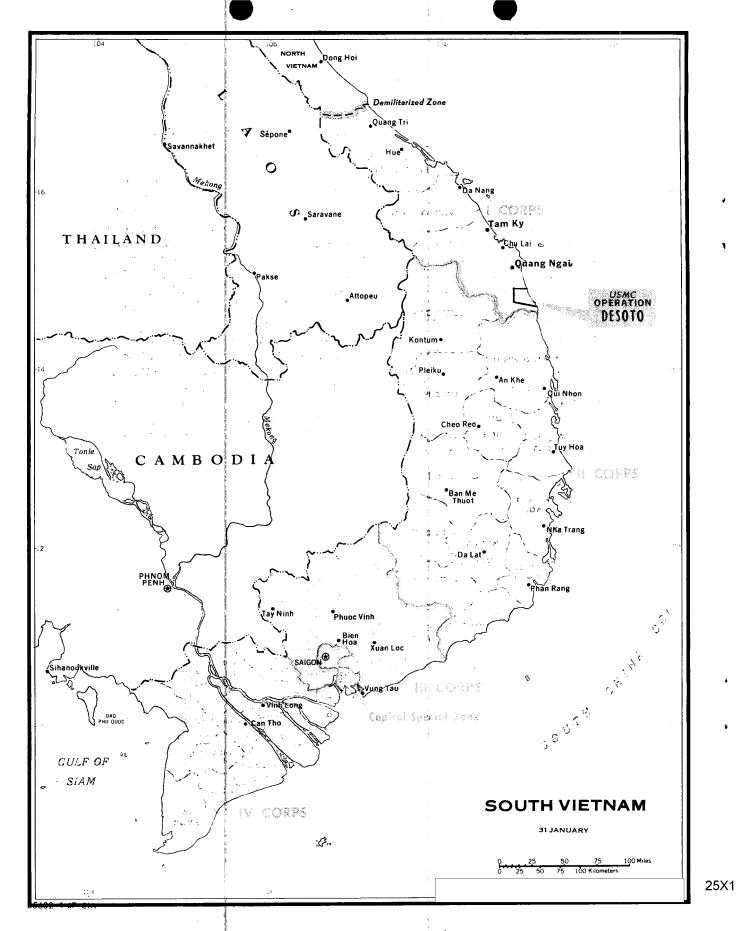


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	Information as of 1600 31 January 1967 25X1
6	HIGHLIGHTS
Ť	US Marines are reported engaged in heavy fighting in Quang Ngai Province. Some unrest is reported among students at Saigon University's School of Medicine.
	I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Heavy fighting has been reported between US Marines of Operation DESOTO and Communist forces in Quang Ngai Province (Para. 1). Eleven Communist soldiers were killed during a two-hour battle with US Marines about five miles south of Tam Ky in coastal Quang Tin Prov- ince on 30 January (Para. 2).
	II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: On 30 January, the Constituent Assembly approved several

constitutional provisions dealing with the lower house of the future national legislature (Paras 1-2). Students at Saigon University's School of Medicine are restive, and recent government action there may cause the unrest to spread elsewhere in the university (Paras. 3-6). A northern Catholic refugee organization has begun a broad campaign against "false peace" in South Vietnam (Para. 7).

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- IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.
- V. Communist Political Developments: The Soviet press has claimed that Chinese demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi (Para. 1).



### I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. In the coastal flatlands of Quang Ngai Province, US Marines of the one-battalion Operation DESOTO encountered a well dug in Communist force on 30 January. The fighting, centered in an area about 25 miles south of Quang Ngai city, was heavy at times. US artillery, tactical air strikes and naval gunfire were called in to support the Marine force. Preliminary casualty reports indicate that 11 Americans have been killed and 46 wounded in the fighting, which at last report was continuing. Initial enemy losses were reported as 35 killed.
- 2. A US Marine company-size patrol was attacked on 30 January in an area about five miles southwest of Tam Ky in coastal Quang Tin Province by an enemy force estimated at 25 to 30 men. About 800 rounds of small-arms fire was received by the Marine force, which returned the fire and was also supported by US artillery. Six Americans were wounded in the two-hour encounter. Eleven Communist soldiers were reported killed.

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#### II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. On 30 January, the Constituent Assembly approved the first three articles of the constitution's third chapter, which is concerned with the legislative branch. These provisions deal mainly with the organization of the lower house, which will range in size from 100 to 200 members. Deputies in the lower house will be elected by universal suffrage on direct and secret ballots, will serve four-year terms, and may be re-elected.
- 2. Candidates for seats in the lower house will run in separate constituencies no larger than provinces. This method is similar to the one used in the United States for the election of the House of Representatives, and differs from the Constituent Assembly election last fall, when a modified list system was employed in each province and autonomous city. Candidates for the lower house must be at least 25 years old, possess full rights of citizenship, have their draft status in order, and meet other conditions that will be specified in the future electoral law.

# Students Restive at Saigon University's School of Medicine

3. The public installation of a new five-man governing committee appointed by the government for Saigon University's faculty of medicine took place on 30 January with an estimated 500 troops on guard against possible disruptive efforts by students. The ceremony had been postponed on two earlier occasions because of student opposition. Students at the ceremony on 30 January carried banners protesting government interference in university affairs, but there was no violence.

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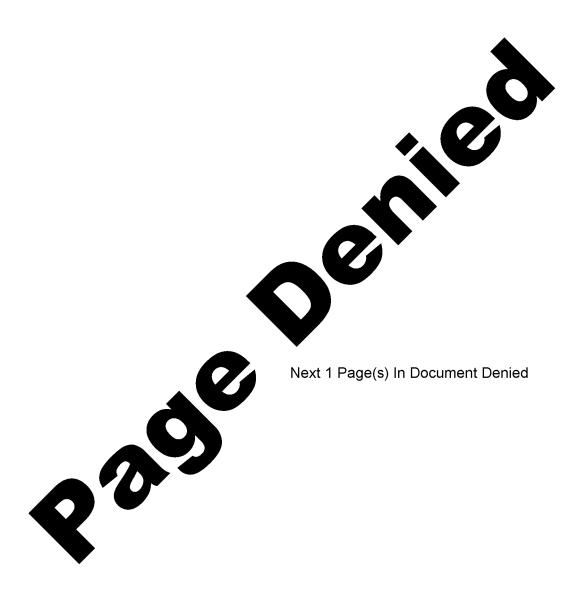
- 4. The origins of unrest among the medical students extend at least as far back as last spring, when the students, with faculty encouragement, spearheaded pro-"struggle" demonstrations. More recently, medical students led demonstrations in mid-November against French, American, or other foreign instruction on the grounds that it was detrimental to Vietnamese culture. In mid-January, Premier Ky apparently decided that it was necessary to replace the dean and four other professors at the school, and to establish stricter government supervision over it.
- 5. US officials in Saigon are as yet unsure what, if any, outside political forces are behind the student agitation. It is possible that some of the student leaders have connections with Tri Quang's Buddhists or with dissident southerners.
- 6. It is also possible that student unrest may spread because of the government's recent action at the medical school. The US Embassy has a reliable report that the student presidents at ten of the 14 faculties and schools affiliated with the university have signed a petition denouncing the infringement of the university's sovereignty, and have scheduled a meeting on 31 January to decide what action to take.

### Refugee Catholic Group Campaigns Against "False Peace"

7. The Greater Unity Force, a northern Catholic lay political group with an estimated 100,000 members, has begun a campaign to oppose those who are willing to settle for peace with the Viet Cong on terms that would favor an eventual Communist take-over in South Vietnam. On 30 January, 100 members of the group's central committee held a seminar on the subject at Saigon's city hall. They later presented petitions to a government representative that were addressed to Chief of State Thieu, Premier Ky, and President Johnson. Earlier, the Saigon daily newspaper Xay Dung, edited by Father Nguyen Quang Lam, printed a letter, addressed to a US religious group now meeting in Washington, which outlined the dangers of Communist peace propaganda.

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### IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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### V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

l. Peking's current anti-Soviet campaign, which has included demonstrations by Chinese students at Soviet embassies in several countries, has spread to Hanoi, according to a report in the Soviet journal Izvestia. It reports that Chinese students and diplomats staged a demonstration at the gates of the Soviet embassy in Hanoi on 30 January. This incident will undoubtedly embarrass North Vietnam, which seeks to maintain friendly relations with both Peking and Moscow.

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